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## Three new State Police boats are dedicated to fallen troopers

**Codey uses ceremony to blast Bush for cutting security funds to Newark and Jersey City**

Monday, December 20, 2004

**BY RICK HEPP**  
Star-Ledger Staff

Acting Gov. Richard Codey and state congressional members gathered yesterday to dedicate three State Police patrol boats in honor of fallen troopers, but their rhetoric revolved as much around three other boats that weren't in the water.

The 44-foot aluminum-hulled vessels, moored at Liberty State Park in Jersey City for the ceremony, cost \$750,000 apiece and were purchased with \$2.25 million in federal funds that Sen. Jon Corzine (D-N.J.) secured through an appropriations bill approved by Congress in fiscal year 2003 and various grants.

The other three boats, which Corzine identified as a priority to protect New Jersey's ports and coastline, haven't been purchased because federal funds weren't available.

Prospects for purchasing the boats appear grim in light of the Bush administration's decision earlier this month to slash millions of dollars from homeland security grants for Jersey City and Newark, officials said.

"These boats are another line of defense against a potential attack and ultimately they will keep our citizens safer," Codey said during the ceremony. "But New Jersey is still being neglected by the federal government."

It was the latest public lobbying effort by Corzine, Codey and U.S. Rep. Robert Menendez, whose district includes Jersey City and the ports in Elizabeth and Newark, to get the Urban Area Security Initiative grants reinstated to current levels.

Under the announced cuts, Jersey City's aid would be reduced from \$17 million to \$6.7 million for the coming year and Newark's funding would be cut from \$14.9 million to \$12.4 million.

Codey said the formula used to determine funding doesn't make sense if it gives more homeland security money per capita to Wyoming than to New Jersey, which has Newark Liberty International Airport, major ports, a huge mass transit network and a large concentration of chemical and

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"Al Qaeda is clearly more likely to be looking at this part of the country than they are likely to be casing barns and 4-H clubs in the Midwest," he said.

The acting governor and the state's congressional members also plan to privately lobby top officials in the Department of Homeland Security. A date for those high-level meetings has yet to be set, but it is expected to happen in the coming weeks, the acting governor's spokeswoman, Kelley Heck, said.

"9/11 sent a notice to us all that we live in a changed world and we must be vigilant and take steps" to address potential threats, Corzine said. "It is absolutely essential that the federal government know that 'no' is not an acceptable answer."

The three new boats are equipped with surface- and underwater-surveillance technology, thermal-imaging cameras and night vision gear. They were named in honor of the last three State Police troopers killed in the line of duty:

- Trooper Scott M. Gonzalez, 35, who was fatally shot on Oct. 24, 1997, by a burglary suspect during a car chase in Warren County;
- Trooper Christopher S. Scales, 40, who was struck by a truck during seat belt checks at a New Jersey Turnpike tollbooth in Carteret on Dec. 3, 2002.
- Trooper Bertram T. Zimmerman III, 32, who lost control of his cruiser and struck a utility pole while investigating a string of armed robberies at convenience stores in Dennis Township, Cape May County on Feb. 5 of this year.


"I cannot think of a greater way to honor our heroes who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty than to dedicate these boats to them that will be used to help protect New Jersey's citizens," said State Police Superintendent Rick Fuentes.

Two of the boats have been assigned to the Newark Bay station while the third will be used to patrol near the Salem nuclear power plant in South Jersey.

During the dedication, Gonzalez's widow, Maureen, thanked Corzine for getting the funding to purchase the boats and she thanked the State Police for honoring her husband and the two other troopers.

"Their lives will live on forever in our hearts and this dedication allows their names and their memories and their sacrifices to live on for many years," she said. "This is a very proud day for us to see their names on those vessels."

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